

Working with a lipspeaker

You'll find this factsheet useful if you want to find out more about booking and working with a lipspeaker – whether you are deaf or have hearing loss, or are an employer or service provider.

Contents

- What does a lipspeaker do? **2**
- When is a lipspeaker needed? **2**
- Who pays for communication support? **3**
- How do I book a lipspeaker? **4**
- How many lipspeakers should I book?. **4**
- How much do lipspeakers charge?. **4**
- What should I consider when working with a lipspeaker?. **4**
- Where can I get more information about communication support? **6**

i If you'd like this factsheet in Braille, large print or audio, please contact our Information Line – see last page for contact details.



Note: In this factsheet, we use the term 'hearing loss' to refer to all levels of loss – from mild to profound.

What does a lipspeaker do?

A lipspeaker provides communication support to people with hearing loss who communicate through lipreading and speech. They silently repeat what a speaker says, producing the shape of the words clearly and, where necessary, using facial expressions to show meaning. This makes it easier for people with hearing loss to lipread what's being said.

Many people speak at speeds of up to 200 words a minute, so a lipspeaker might cut down fast speech. But they won't lose the meaning of what the speaker is saying.


Sometimes, a lipspeaker may use their voice, as well as clear communication techniques, to support people with hearing loss who use a combination of listening and lipreading. They may sometimes fingerspell words that are difficult to lipread, if the lipreader asks them to. And if somebody has difficulty understanding a person with hearing loss, the lipspeaker might be able to relay what that person is saying.

When is a lipspeaker needed?

Lipspeakers can be needed in a variety of situations, such as:

- workshops or conferences
- work meetings
- job interviews
- training courses
- university or college lectures or seminars
- medical consultations
- parent/teacher meetings
- meetings with bank managers or local government officials
- police interviews, meetings with solicitors, or court or tribunal hearings.

If you need to book communication support on behalf of someone with hearing loss, it's important that you first check which type of support they prefer.

 See the other factsheets in our **Communication** range to find out about different types of communication support.

Who pays for communication support?

Under the Equality Act (the Disability Discrimination Act in Northern Ireland), the private, public and voluntary sectors need to make 'reasonable adjustments' so that people who are disabled aren't placed at a substantial disadvantage. These adjustments can include providing equipment and communication support, such as a lipspeaker, for their employees or those who use their services who have hearing loss.

Public services, organisations and businesses may be able to get government funding to help cover the costs of any equipment and communication support needed by their employees or those who use their services (see below).


People who need communication support for private events, such as family gatherings, may need to book and pay for it themselves.

 You can find out more about the Equality Act in our **Your rights** range of factsheets.

At work


Access to Work is a government-run scheme that provides practical advice and support to people who are disabled and their employers. It may help to pay for any communication support and equipment that people with hearing loss need at interviews and in the workplace.

It's usually the employer who arranges and pays for the support – they then claim back the approved costs from Access to Work. Large organisations and businesses may need to contribute towards the cost of the equipment and communication support.

 Find out more at [gov.uk/access-to-work](https://www.gov.uk/access-to-work) or nidirect.gov.uk if you live in Northern Ireland.


In education

Schools and colleges should arrange and pay for communication support for students with hearing loss in primary, secondary and further education. Students with hearing loss in higher education should be able to get Disabled Students' Allowances (DSAs) to pay for any communication support and equipment that they need. All institutions will have a student support or disability office that you can contact for further information.

 To find out more about DSAs, contact your national student finance body ([see pages 6-7](#)).

When using health and social care services

National guidance and quality standards aim to improve the accessibility of NHS and social care services for people who are deaf or have hearing loss. Any communication support required should be provided, and paid for, by these services.

 For more information, and to find out about our campaign to improve access to healthcare, visit actiononhearingloss.org.uk/ontherecord

How do I book a lipspeaker?

There are fewer than 50 registered lipspeakers in the country, so book one in advance – at least 4–6 weeks before you need them.

You can contact a lipspeaker directly or book through:

- our Access Solutions team
- the National Registers of Communication Professionals working with Deaf and Deafblind People (NRCPD)
- the Association of Lipspeakers (ALS).

[See page 6](#) for contact details.

Note: Always make sure that the lipspeaker you book is registered with NRCPD. To check, visit nrcpd.org.uk

All registered lipspeakers abide by the NRCPD code of conduct and are subject to the NRCPD complaints procedure.

How many lipspeakers should I book?

Lipreading and lipspeaking can be very tiring. Lipspeakers need regular breaks, as a high level of concentration goes into providing the service. The breaks will also help the lipreader, as they need to have fixed concentration so they don't miss anything.

If you think your meeting will be more than two hours long, or if the meeting content is complicated, book two lipspeakers so they can alternate and take breaks when they need to. The agency or lipspeaker will advise you on this.

How much do lipspeakers charge?

Fees vary, so ask how much you'll be charged when you make the booking. Remember, lipspeakers usually have a minimum call-out charge – for example, they may charge for two hours even if you only book them for one.

What should I consider when working with a lipspeaker?

You'll find the following tips helpful if you're arranging a session where a lipspeaker will be used:

- If possible, book a lipspeaker with knowledge of the topic being discussed.
- Send the lipspeaker advance copies of any papers, an agenda for the session and any other information that will help them to prepare for the assignment properly.
- Make sure you reserve a seat near the front for the person using the lipspeaker.

- Make sure the room you're using is well lit, otherwise lipreading will be difficult. It's also important to consider the background that a lipspeaker is placed against – check there are no distractions that could make lipreading difficult.
- Make it clear at the start of the session that only one person at a time can speak. If two people talk at the same time, the lipspeaker can't properly convey to the lipreader what's being said.
- A lipspeaker needs regular breaks – roughly every 30 minutes. Don't expect them to work through breaks, unless this is pre-arranged.
- The lipspeaker may occasionally ask the speaker for clarification if they don't understand a term used or if they can't keep up with them.
- A person with hearing loss will need to look at the lipspeaker so they can follow what's being said, but don't direct your comments to the lipspeaker – address the person with hearing loss directly. The lipspeaker won't add their own comments or views.

Deaf awareness and sign language training

We offer a variety of flexible training course options to meet the specific requirements of your organisation.

All of our trainers are deaf themselves and use British Sign Language (BSL) as their first language. This means they are able to bring their personal experience of the barriers deaf people face every day, guaranteeing an immersive training experience.

To find out more, contact our Access Solutions team:

Telephone: **0333 240 5658**
(calls welcome via Next Generation Text Service)

Email: access.solutions@hearingloss.org.uk

Or visit actiononhearingloss.org.uk/business



Find tips to help you communicate well with people with hearing loss at actiononhearingloss.org.uk/communicationtips

Where can I get more information about communication support?

Action on Hearing Loss

The other factsheets in our **Communication** range are:

- *Booking a sign language interpreter*
- *Working with a communication support worker*
- *Working with a notetaker*
- *Working with a speech-to-text reporter*
- *Communication support for people who are deafblind*
- *Careers supporting people who are deaf.*

You can order these from our Information Line ([see last page](#)) or download them from our website at actiononhearingloss.org.uk/factsheets

Access Solutions

To book communication support through Action on Hearing Loss, contact our Access Solutions team:

Telephone: **0845 685 8000**
Textphone: **0845 685 8001**
Email: communication.services@hearingloss.org.uk

You can also book online at actiononhearingloss.org.uk/communication

Other organisations

Association of Lipspeakers

Professional body representing lipspeakers.

Online contact form: lipspeaking.co.uk/contact-us
Email: enquiries@lipspeaking.co.uk
Website: lipspeaking.co.uk

The National Registers for Communication Professionals working with Deaf and Deafblind People (NRCPD)

NRCPD regulates and holds registers of communication and language professionals who work with deaf and deafblind people, including lipspeakers.

Telephone: **0191 383 1155**
SMS: **07974 121 594**
Email: enquiries@nrcpd.org.uk
Website: nrcpd.org.uk

Information you can trust

We are certified by The Information Standard as a producer of high-quality, evidence-based information.

Did you find this factsheet helpful?

We'd love to know what you think of this factsheet – please email us at reviewpanel@hearingloss.org.uk

If you'd like to join our Readers' Panel, to help us create new publications and improve existing ones, please let us know.

Further information from Action on Hearing Loss

Our expert information covers everything you need to know about:

- hearing loss and deafness
- tinnitus
- ear problems and treatments
- hearing aids and cochlear implants
- useful products and technology
- communication tactics and support
- benefits and grants
- your rights.

Visit our website actiononhearingloss.org.uk or call our Information Line ([see last page](#)) for information, support and publications. You can also find out about services in your area, our hearing research, and how you can get involved.

Please help us support others

We provide our leaflets, factsheets and Information Line service free of charge to anyone affected by deafness, tinnitus or hearing loss in the UK. We rely on the generosity of our supporters to help us do this. We would be very grateful if you would consider making a donation - of as little or as much as you can afford.

Please send a cheque, payable to Action on Hearing Loss, to:

Freepost RTLX-CZKX-BTTZ
Action on Hearing Loss
1-3 Highbury Station Road
London N1 1SE
(No stamp needed)

Donate online at actiononhearingloss.org.uk/icanhelp
Or make a donation over the phone by credit or debit card:

 **0203 227 6182**

 **0203 227 6185**

Thank you.

Our purpose is to help people confronting deafness, tinnitus and hearing loss to live the life they choose. We enable them to take control of their lives and remove the barriers in their way.

To find out more about what we do and how you can support us, go to actiononhearingloss.org.uk

Action on Hearing Loss Information Line

Telephone **0808 808 0123**
Textphone **0808 808 9000**
SMS **0780 000 0360**
(standard text message rates apply)
Email **information@hearingloss.org.uk**

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